

How WHIP Works in Tennessee

Updated 2/20/09

The Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP) is a voluntary program for private landowners to develop and improve high quality habitat that supports wildlife populations of National, State, Tribal, and local significance. WHIP was reauthorized in the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002 and the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (Farm Bills). Through WHIP, the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) provides technical and financial assistance to eligible participants. Land eligible for WHIP includes: Private agricultural land, Non-industrial private forest land, and Tribal land. Non-agricultural lands, as well as State, county, or local government-owned lands are now ineligible for WHIP.

A contract containing a WHIP Plan of Operations (WPO) will be developed by NRCS in conjunction with the producer that identifies the appropriate conservation practice or practices to address the resource concerns on applications that are accepted into the program. WHIP contracts are generally 5 to 10 years in length and provide cost-share to implement the conservation practices. The practices are subject to NRCS technical standards adapted for local conditions. Beginning in fiscal year 2009, applicants must pass the Tennessee EQIP & WHIP Screening Tool to be ranked. Applications received as of March 30, 2009, upon passing the screening tool, will be evaluated and ranked for assistance for the 2009 fiscal year program. If approved for funding, the participant must begin implementation of at least one practice within the first 12 months and continue practice implementation according to the contract schedule. Cost-share eligibility is contingent on the producer not starting the practice prior to having an approved WHIP contract signed by the appropriate Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) representative or without prior approval by the NRCS State Conservationist.

Payment schedules have been developed for all eligible practices based on 75% of the state average cost of implementing the practice. Payment rates for Limited Resource Farmer and Rancher (LRF), Beginning Farmer and Rancher (BF) and Socially Disadvantaged Farmers (SDF) will all receive the Historically Underserved (HU) payment schedule amount. The HU payment rate is based on 90% of the state average cost of implementing the practice. Farmers and ranchers may elect to use a certified Technical Service Provider (TSP) for technical assistance funded by NRCS.